

# A STUDY OF KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S *PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER*

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## INTRODUCTION

Among Katherine Anne Porter's works, there are some stories in which the heroine is Miranda. These stories are called Miranda stories. Since Miranda is considered to have much in common with the author, they are regarded as semi-autobiographical stories. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is one of such works. Generally speaking, Miranda stories are initiation stories. In those works Miranda discovers the truth of the world with her own eyes and is initiated into it step by step. In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, she is older than in any other Miranda stories, and she is initiated into life and death. In *Old Mortality*, the preceding work, she is initiated into the past, and at the end of it, she makes up her mind to break the ties with her family and with the past and to leave her native house, because her elders prevent her from looking at the world with her own eyes and demand that she should accept their vision of life, though they

cannot tell the truth in the smallest thing. She wants to know what life is and to find out the truth of life by herself, but at that time she has no idea where to find it out. In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Porter writes how Miranda, freed from the ties of the past, copes with life with her own will, and how and what she comes to know of life.

In this short novel (I should like to call it a short novel rather than a short story), Miranda is twenty-four years old. She works at a newspaper office as a reporter, living in a rooming house by herself apart from her native house. It is the latter days of World War I and a deadly influenza is prevalent. Miranda is hostile to the war. She is reluctant to live. In her gloomy life, she comes to love Adam Barclay, a second Lieutenant in an Engineers Corps, of the same age as hers, who comes on leave to the city and by chance to the rooming house where she lives, his outfit expecting to be sent overseas shortly. She is taken ill with influenza, and during the delirium of the sickness she goes to the world of death. She recovers from the sickness by a miracle, on Armistice Day. She is informed that Adam had died of influenza, but when she leaves the hospital, she prepares to live her future life with hope.

This novel seems to be very important for the purpose of learning Porter's view of life. Nevertheless, this novel is so subtle and complicated—above all, the last part is so ambiguous—that a reader may not always be sure how Miranda changes in her view of life after she experiences death or whether really she changes or not. On that point various interpretations seem to be possible. In this paper I should like to try to give an interpretation of this novel and to consider Porter's view of life. Porter gives the present day world, "a waste land", as the background of this novel, so that, that old yet ever new question, "What is life?", has modern meaning. When we consider life, we cannot neglect the background of it. Before she experiences death, Miranda's attitude toward life is inevitably influenced by the present-day world. In the first chapter, we will examine the characteristics of the present-day world, and we will also see how Miranda feels and acts in the world. In the second chapter we will discuss Miranda's love, because love plays an important role in this novel. When she is dead, she is

taken back to life by her love for Adam. The last chapter will be about her experience of death, and we will discuss what she learns of life from the experience of death and what kind of view of life she finally comes to shape.

## CHAPTER I THE PRESENT-DAY WORLD AND MIRANDA'S WAY OF LIFE

Before we go into the question of the present-day world, I should like briefly to consider the opening dream of this novel. The dream seems to be important to learn Miranda's background. Porter so contrives that it reveals Miranda's past and future to the reader. Her past is told by her family ties, and her future—death and resurrection—which is a theme of this novel, is foretold by the journey to the world of death and the turning back halfway.

In this dream Miranda starts on a journey accompanied by "a lank greenish stranger"<sup>1</sup> riding on a grey horse. The stranger is Death. Death is again referred to as one riding on a pale horse, in a Negro spiritual which she sings together with Adam, her lover, when she is sick with influenza. We can trace the source of it back to the Bible, and the title of the novel comes from it.

And I saw, and behold, a pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them a authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6: 8)

Miranda remembers in the dream that the stranger hung about her native house. He was liked and welcomed by her dead relatives and by the dead animals in the house. Death has been near to her. She thinks, "I have seen this fellow before, I know this man if I could place him. He is no stranger to me." (p. 300) In *The Fig Tree* too, death is a usual happening around little Miranda.

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Anne Porter, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1967. p. 299. The quotations from her works in this paper are from this volume.

Mama was dead. Dead meant gone away for ever. Dying was something that happened all the time, to people and everything else. Somebody died, and there was a long string of carriages going at a slow walk over the rocky ridge of the hill towards the river while the bell tolled and tolled, and that person was never seen again by anybody. Kittens and chickens and specially little turkeys died much oftener, and sometimes calves, . . . (p. 388)

From Miranda's sense of intimacy with death, we can guess something of Porter's view of death. She seems to believe that death joins life and that there is continuity between them. If it were not so, Miranda could not live with one foot in this world and with another foot in the world of death, as she feels she does when she recovers from death, about which we will discuss in the last chapter.

It is from her native house that Miranda sets out on her dream journey. She loves this house and yet she wishes to be freed from the family ties. This refers to Miranda's family and explains her feelings for them; therefore, we learn that she is the same protagonist that we meet in Porter's preceding work, *Old Mortality*, and we are introduced to Miranda's past.

Miranda has ambivalent feelings not only for the past but also for future, that is, for death. She sets out on the journey to the world of death, but from the first she does not mean to go as far the world of death. She only plans to outrun Death and the devil on the journey. On the way, she turns back and parts from Death, shouting that this time she is not going with him. In her real life, she wishes to die, while on the other hand, she clings to life. This is shown in her feelings in the dream. This dream is so planned as to be the introductory part of this novel. From only one instance of this dream we cannot but admire Porter for her skilful planning in composing a story.

Now let us see Miranda's reality into which she is wakened from the dream and how she copes with it. Before she experiences death, Miranda cannot be at home in this world. She suffers much in her life. Her painful experience in this world is necessary for her in order to attain a truly serious and steady view of life when she recovers from death.

Porter sets war and a disease as the background of this novel. It is the latter days of World War I and a deadly influenza is raging in the towns. It is considered that Porter symbolizes this world by these evils.

War and a disease create uneasiness and distrust among people. There are many kinds of uneasiness. The fear of death may be the greatest. Men are fighting and dying on the battlefield and because of the great epidemic, ambulances run all night and the streets are full of funerals all day. Some people are afraid of being separated from their beloved. Miranda is hostile to war, and she is afraid that, if she should tell openly what she thinks, she would be accused of lack of patriotism with extraordinary bitterness. She must always be on the alert. She cannot trust others. She says:

... the worst of war is the fear and suspicion and awful expression in all the eyes you meet ... as if they had pulled down the shutters over their minds and their hearts and were peering out at you, ready to leap if you make one gesture or say one word they do not understand instantly. It frightens me; I live in fear, too, It's the skulking about, and the lying. It's what war does to the mind and the heart, Adam, and you can't separate these two—what it does to them is worse than what it can do to the body. (p. 326)

Miranda cannot be at ease in such a world.

Some people, however, take part positively in this world. They are sympathizers with war. She can hardly bear to live among them. They are the very components of the world where she cannot be at home. Her blood is frozen by "a grim determined clang of a girlish laughter." (p. 307) The laughter is that of the young women who raise money by giving tea-dances, bridge parties or charity bazaars and with the money buy things for the men in the cantonment hospital and go to comfort them. Miranda gets angry with those young women who are absorbed in rolling "bandages that will never reach a base hospital" and knitting "sweaters that will never warm a manly chest." (p. 322) Miranda is irritated because they are contented with such a life. Some professional patriots take advantage of the war in order to make themselves important persons. Miranda is not tolerant of their insensitivity to the evil of the war. The sympathizers with the war all seem hateful to her. Even the thought of doing without sugar and wool socks makes her unhappy. She hates the war and curses it.

Miranda feels hopeless before the evils of this world. Then she rejects this world and wishes to escape from it. The evils of this world

are too powerful for her to overcome, or it may be that Porter considers that these evils are produced by human beings who therefore are destined for these evils. That they are artificial is suggested by a rumour that the influenza is caused by germs brought by a German ship to Boston, and by a speech of a Liberty Bonds salesman, who shouts "... the war, the *war*, the WAR to end WAR, war for Democracy, for humanity, ..." (p. 325) This speech is ironical, because it gives us an impression that war will never end as long as human beings are alive.

Feeling herself so hopeless, Miranda loses her will to live positively in this world. She is reluctant to do anything. She does not have any interest in her job either. It is symbolically expressed in her preference for grey color which implies inertia or ennui. Her mood is shown in the following sentences:

Slowly, unwillingly, Miranda drew herself up inch by inch out of the pit of sleep, waited in a daze for life to begin again. A single word struck in her mind, a gong of warning, reminding her for the day long what she forgot happily in sleep, and only in sleep. The war, said the gong, and she shook her head. (pp. 300-301)

Thus we know the cause of her reluctance is the war and her mind is spoiled by the war. Her body is also ruined by the evils of this world. She has a headache and it seems to her to have begun with the war. It suggests that the headache has something to do with the war, though it is a sign of influenza. She says to Adam "I cannot smell or see or hear today. I must have a fearful cold." (p. 314) Her senses are also deprived of their functions by the evil.

The prevailing tone of this novel is drabness which seems to have come from Miranda's reluctant mind. *The Flowering Judas* has a similar tone. In fact, Miranda and Laura have much in common. Both are rejecting persons. By rejecting they protect themselves from the evils of the world. This is represented by Miranda's gloves. When she goes on a job she is unwilling to do, she puts on grey gloves and never takes them off in the presence of those whom she does not like. Only Adam can pull them off. In *Flowering Judas*, Laura's state of mind is described as follows:

... the very cells of her flesh reject knowledge and kinship in one monotonous word. No. No. No. She draws her strength from this one holy talismanic word which does not suffer her to be led into evil. Denying everything, she may walk anywhere in safety, she looks at everything without amazement. (p. 107)

They reject in order to protect themselves; therefore their rejection seems to have something to do with selfishness. And Miranda is saved by keeping up her egoism as we are going to discuss in the following chapter.

While both Miranda and Laura are rejecting persons, they do not have their own way to the last. Miranda agrees reluctantly with crafty Liberty Bonds salesmen who intimidate her to buy the bonds, although she thinks that she cannot afford it. Laura does not decidedly refuse Braggioni's love. Both she and Miranda yield, because they think that if they should refuse to do so, they would lose their job or be put in jail. When they try to defend themselves, they cannot be consistent with themselves. And they suffer from self-contradiction. Laura "cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be," (pp. 101-102) and Miranda suffers because she outwardly helps to win the war against her wish. She says:

I do worse. I write pieces advising other young women to knit and roll bandages and do without sugar and help win the war. (p. 311)

While Miranda is trying to protect herself from the evils of this world, she tries to escape from the miserable reality. She wishes she could lose memory, or keep sleeping, or die. When she is given a challenge by a shabby has-been actor whom she panned in the newspaper, she says:

There's too much of everything in the world just now. I'd like to sit down here on the kerb, Chuck, and die, and never again see—I wish I could lose my memory and forget my own name. . . . (p. 320)

Before she experiences death, the present-day world has a great influence over her life. She cannot consider her life independent of the background of this world where she lives. Therefore, when she rejects

the phenomena of the world characterizing it, feeling it is impossible to reform it by removing them, the rejection leads to the rejection of her life itself, and it follows that she wishes to die.

## CHAPTER II LOVE

### (I)

Porter seems to consider love to be a very important factor of human life which binds human beings to life. Miranda's love has a great part in her life. In this chapter, tracing the process of her love, we will see how her life and love are related with each other.

In her gloomy life, Miranda finds peace in Adam. The hour she spends with Adam is the only really pleasant one. She likes him but there is something more to it than that. She may probably love him unconsciously. As long as she is healthy, however, their love is not developed, although Adam is always ready to be her lover.

One reason why she cannot love him lies in Miranda herself. She tries to prevent herself from loving him. She says, "I don't want to love Adam, there is no time and we are not ready for it. . . ." (p. 323) Adam is to go to war, and is committed to death. She will be hurt if she should love a man who is to die; therefore, she tries to protect herself from being hurt, by refusing her love. We have seen in the previous chapter that Miranda protects herself against the present-day evils by rejecting. Even in her love, she tries to do so. The protection is done by her reason, so it can be said that her reason suppresses her love so that it may not come forth. She says that she is not ready for love. She seems to think that in order to love, one needs to prepare. Love is a matter of emotion. It awakes in one's heart any moment, but she tries to suppress the emotion by reason. She, as it were, arms herself by an armour of reason so that she may not be hurt.

Another reason why love is not developed between Adam and Miranda is that they live on different levels. Adam does not have the characteristics of the present-day person. He is "pure all the way through, flawless, complete, as the sacrificial lamb must be," (p. 326) and he boasts that he



has never had a pain in his life. He is not spoiled by the evils of the present-day world. He looks "so clear and fresh like a fine healthy apple." (p. 310) He is manly, indeed he is an embodiment of masculinity. He is not a present-day image. He is, so to speak, "a non-present person," that is, a person who does not represent this age. In fact, he does not seem to belong to any specific age as it is implied by his name, "a general man." He can be said also to be a timeless person. The facts that he dislikes a wristwatch and likes the fragments of meteors, rock formations, fossilized tusks and trees, or Indian arrows, shows that he is such a person. Those things which he likes belong to old times or take long time to be made. Though she rejects the present world, Miranda is a present-day person. She has present-day characteristics herself, and her body and mind are spoiled by the present-day evils, and she has had "too many pains to mention." (p. 311) She is, so to speak, "an anti-present person." Therefore, Miranda and Adam are interestingly contrasted. To begin with, he is "all olive and tan and tawny, hay colored and sand colored from hair to boots." He makes a fine contrast with Miranda's grey gloves, grey stockings, and grey horse. Adam is a man of skill and does not seem to be a man of thought. He likes "machinery and things carved out of wood or stone," (p. 316) and he is good at driving a car and sailing a boat, but he cannot get through any book except textbooks of engineering; reading bores him. On the contrary, Miranda is an intellectual woman. She is a journalist; to read and to write are her job, but she does not seem to be otherwise skillful; in fact she can hardly knit socks.

Thus they live on different levels, so they cannot meet mentally. "There's something terribly wrong" for Miranda, and she "feels too rotten. It can't just be the weather, and the war." (p. 313) While this is literally the sign of the influenza, symbolically it refers to her melancholy. Yet, for Adam, "the weather is perfect and the war is simply too good to be true," and he "has got straight out of the blue." (p. 313) Consequently, it is impossible for him to understand her feelings. Miranda wants to tell Adam about her apprehension but cannot do it. She says to herself:

Adam, come out of your dream and listen to me. I have pains in my chest and my head and my heart and they're real. I am in pain all over, and you are in such danger as I can't bear to think about, and why can we not save each other? (p. 327)

Miranda cannot find relief in Adam, and so she envies the young pair sitting at a corner table in a restaurant, embracing each other without a word, their eyes staring at the same place, because there seems to be a full understanding between them, and because they seem to share a world even though it is a hell. They are a good contrast to Adam and Miranda.

At the table nearest Miranda and Adam, a young woman is telling her young man a story which seems to be about her date with a man who tried to seduce her by getting her drunk. She says:

And I don't like him because he's too fresh. He kept on asking me to take a drink and I kept telling him, I don't drink and he said, now look here, I want a drink the worst way and I think it's mean of you not to drink with me, I can't sit up here and drink by myself, he said. I told him, You're not by yourself in the first place; I like that, I said, and if you want a drink go ahead and have it, I told him, why drag *me* in? . . . (p. 328)

Porter must have taken pains in contriving this episode in order to describe Miranda's feelings for Adam. If we substitute the word "love" for "drink" in the episode, we shall see that it shows Miranda's feelings, though the woman uses "fresh" in the slangy meaning, "impudent," and in Adam's case it must be used in the sense of "pure." This episode does not seem to have any sense until we regard it that way. Porter cannot put meaningless lines in her elaborate work.

Miranda likes Adam because he is pure and clean; that is, he is not infected with the evils of this world, but since she is a present-day person, she cannot love him. The present-day world is, for Miranda, "the waste land."

(2)

When she is healthy, Miranda cannot love Adam, but taken ill with influenza and feeling she may not live any more, she comes to love Adam. This is because her reason which suppresses her emotion when she is healthy, is weakened. She casts off the armour of reason and her emotion

finds its way out. Seeing Adam making a fire at the fireplace of her room, Miranda says to him, "I think your're very beautiful." (p. 333) He is indeed handsome. Once she thought him to be like a fine healthy apple. That is an objective description with no emotion, but "beautiful" is a sensuous word. Thus, as Miranda's emotion is freed and her love is expressed, her life comes to be worth living too. She tells him that she feels that now she can be happy about almost anything and that she loves being alive. Can we imagine to hear such words from the former Miranda?

As she has cast off the armour of reason, there is no longer the self-interest that she would be hurt by loving Adam because he is committed to death. Casting off the armour, the modern person is freed from his characteristics which make him what he is. Miranda now stands on the same level as Adam. There is no discordance now between primitively pure Adam and Miranda carrying many pains. Porter seems to consider that the armour of reason, characterizes a type of modern person who cannot love until he casts out his intellectual ways.

I should like to discuss another phase of Miranda's love. When she confesses love to Adam, Miranda has a desire desperately to cling to something. She desires to do so, because she is attached to life. Her attachment to life is partly because she has a fear of death. It is natural that she should fear death. Every human being is considered to have such fear. Often Miranda dreams in her sickbed. Those dreams are about the terrible world of death. Another reason for her attachment to life is that she has a will to live. On account of this "will to live" she tenaciously clings to life. We are going to discuss the "will to live" in the following chapter. Once she told Adam that her religious education had not been neglected and that all through her life she had been getting ready for something that was going to happen later when the time came. As this seems to refer to her death, it is ironical that she so desperately clings to life. In the opening dream of this novel we have seen that Miranda has ambivalent feelings for death. It means that while she wishes to die in order to escape from this world, she has a fear of death and the will to live. Therefore, when she thinks on her

deathbed that she is going to die soon, that she has nothing but this present moment, that there is nothing but Adam who binds her to life, Miranda desperately clings to Adam. It can be said that she wishes to create a bond between Adam and herself and to be bound to life by that bond. In *Old Mortality* Miranda wishes to break the ties of blood, and because of the hatred for human ties, she even says, "I hate loving, and being loved, I hate love." (p. 242) But to be a human being means to live among the human ties. It is impossible to be freed from all human ties as long as she lives.

Miranda wishes to be saved from death by love; therefore, her love seems to be self-love. In *Old Mortality*, she elopes and gets married at eighteen. It is not for love but for leaving her family. Her marriage is a means to break human ties, and accordingly afterwards she decides to leave her husband's family, too. In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* her love is a means to establish human ties. It may seem to be a little too bitter against Miranda to suppose that she is self-interested even at the moment of death, but the selfish nature of her love is seen in the dream into which she drifts right after she has confessed her love to Adam. In this dream Adam and Miranda are in a small wood. Whizzing arrows come flying from somewhere. They strike him in the heart. He falls straight back before her eyes and rises unwounded and alive. Succeeding flights of arrows strike him one after another and yet he is there before her without being hurt. Seeing this, she interposes herself "angrily and selfishly," between him and the arrows, "crying like a child cheated in a game, "It's my turn now, why must you always be the one to die?" (p. 337) Then the arrows strike her through the heart and through his body and he lies dead and she still lives. Her intention to interpose herself between Adam and the arrows is not to defend him from the arrows but to have her own way. I cannot tell whether we can call such love a true love. Is it impossible for Porter to understand love other than self-love?

This dream forshadowes Adam's future. He never dies in spite of the successive attacks of arrows. He seems to be immortal. He, however, is killed by the ones coming through Miranda's heart, that is,

through her love. It suggests that he is not killed by war nor by a disease (he has got a lot of inoculations); but in consequence of being loved by Miranda, he is infected with her disease and dies of it. Miranda's selfish love makes a sacrifice of Adam's life. This is also suggested in the following reference: Miranda once thinks Adam to be pure "like a sacrificial lamb."

Porter elaborates on this in detail in the novel. Before he comes to Miranda lying in sickbed of the epidemic, Adam gets "a lot of inoculations." (p. 329) It is ironical that so inoculated a person becomes infected with the disease. However, on reading Porter's irony, the reader will hardly be touched by the subtlety of human life; sometimes Porter's technical skill seems to be nothing more than an intellectual game. This may seem to deviate a little too far from the main theme.

The most important point of love in this novel is that Miranda's love for Adam acts as the agent which takes her back to life from death. When she is dead, lying in a rapture of heavenly bliss, she feels "a vague apprehension, a slight distrust in her joy." (p. 344) She feels that "something, somebody is missing," and that "she has lost something, she has left something valuable in another country." (p. 344) Then all of a sudden, she recovers from death. That somebody must be Adam. The valuable thing must be Adam's love. It is considered that Miranda's love for Adam—human bonds—takes her back to life. Porter regards love as bonds which tie human beings to life. And by giving such nature to love, she succeeds in the difficult process of recalling Miranda to life from death.

### CHAPTER III THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH

Death and resurrection seem to be a major theme of this novel. Through the experience of death, Miranda knows the truth of life and takes a step into the new life. Then how does Porter consider death? In the first place, she seems to consider that death adjoins life. This thought is indispensable for Miranda to recover from death. In the next place, she considers that the principal meaning of death lies in the

fact that it is a different world from life. Although there is a continuity between life and death, these two worlds are evidently of different kinds. Porter sets the world of death as a world where Miranda can look at life from outside. We do not know the true meaning of anything until we part with it. When we are happy, we do not appreciate our happiness. We realize our lost happiness for the first time when we become unhappy. Miranda goes to the world of death and knows the different world from that of life, and by perceiving life from that world she can know the truth of life. Miranda's initiation into death is important in the sense that through it she can know the true meaning of life.

On the point of death, lying at "the farthest bottom of life," (p. 343) being entirely severed from all human concerns, with her body and mind losing their functions, Miranda perceives that there remains in herself only "a minute fiercely burning particle of being." (p. 343) This particle is composed entirely of "one single motive, the stubborn will to live." (p. 343) It has no motive or intention but the essential purpose to live. As we have seen in the previous chapter, because of this "will to live," Miranda clings to life and confesses love to Adam. Porter is said to have written this novel from her actual experience. She seems to come to believe through her experience of death that man has originally such a "will to live." It may be said that the will to live is the essential nature of a human being, or the essence of life.

The world of death is splendid; indeed, it is the image of paradise. Miranda, however, cannot be at ease in that world. She realizes how dreadful it is to be lifeless, and how uneasy it is to be entirely severed from all human ties. And she learns when she recovers from death that to be a human being means to live among the human ties.

Recovering from death, Miranda does not seem to be glad of being alive. She looks around with the hostile eyes of an alien. She feels that this ugly country and her ugly body are no place for her spirit to live. She cannot accept heartily the kindness of other people. Her heart is hardened and indifferent to anything. She seems to be unable to grieve even at Adam's death. It may seem at first sight that she is as denying a person as ever, and that she is not changed in the least from

what she used to be, by her experience of death. The fact, however, is that she has changed decidedly. The reason why she does not feel happy to be alive is that the joy of heaven was so deep that she cannot yet get out of the fascination and that she feels alien from this world. The light in heaven was so clear and bright that she feels as if she could not see the true sunlight again. And this world seems to be duller than ever. Therefore, she weeps at night in pity for herself and for her lost rapture. On the other hand she can understand other people who tell her how good it is to be alive. She knows there can be nothing better than to be alive. She feels herself now standing with one foot in this world and with another foot in the world of death, but she knows that soon she can cross back completely to this world. She feels that as time passes, and having completely come back to this life, she will come to be glad of living. She seems obviously to have an affirmative attitude toward life now. In this point she has changed decidedly. She is no longer a rejecting person.

This is because she realizes that the fundamental thing for a human being is to live his life. Miranda learns from the experience of death that the essence of life is the will to live. Then it has no essential meaning to ask what the purpose of living is, or what life is; the purpose of living or the meaning of living, lies in living one's life in itself. And it leads to the affirmation of life.

When she leaves the hospital she says, "I must go now. . . ." (p. 349) She seems to make up her mind bravely to take her first step into the new life. Now she can really grieve at Adam's death. She wishes he were alive, but she cuts herself off as definitely from the sad fact of his death as she does from the bliss of heaven. Though love is an important factor of life, love itself does not mean life.

Taking her attitude as an affirmative one, we can really understand the closing lines of this novel. They are as follows:

No more war, no more plague, only the dazed silence that follows the ceasing of the heavy guns; noiseless houses with the shades drawn, empty streets, the dead cold light of tomorrow. Now there would be time for everything. (p. 350)

It says that there is no more war, no more plague in the new world where

Miranda is standing. In fact the day when she recovers from death is Armistice Day, but it still means nothing more than "cessation from hostilities," and war is to remain with human beings as long as they live. Miranda is cured of the plague but a plague also remains with human beings. Therefore, "no more war, no more plague" seems to refer to her mental state. Before the experience of death, she had a negative attitude toward life. At that time, her life was decidedly influenced by the phenomena characterizing this world, such as war and disease. She could hardly endure such evils and even wished to escape into death. Now, however, after the experience of death, she knows the meaning of life and affirms to live; those phenomena of the world become of little importance in her life. Looking at the world from this stand-point, war and a plague are mere phenomena which have no concern with the essence of the world. They are mere human inventions. They are, so to speak, fictions. This is suggested, as we have referred to in the first chapter, by a rumour about the cause of the plague, or by a speech of the Liberty Bonds salesman.

Those phenomena of this world being fictions, in the new world into which she is stepping, there is nothing that symbolizes this world. Streets are empty and houses are noiseless. Though it is the same present-day world that Miranda knew before her death, the world has changed to a different one in her mind. It can be said that she has overcome the present-day world, "the waste land," by changing her attitude of mind toward life from a negative one to an affirmative one.

There is the dead cold light of tomorrow before Miranda, and she believes there will be time for everything. "The dead cold light" is apparently a contrast to the bright warm light of heaven. She has been initiated into a cold disillusioned reality through the knowledge of heaven. "The light of tomorrow" gives hopeful impression. "Time for everything" is hopeful too. Both tomorrow and time are referred to as future. Miranda has future and she will be able to do everything.



## CONCLUSION

Through the experience of death, Miranda knows that the essence of life is "the will to live", and finally achieves her view of life that the meaning of life lies in living her life affirmatively. By changing the attitude of her mind she can overcome the evils of this world. This view of life seems very commonplace. Whether it is significant or not depends upon the background of the person who bears it. If he comes to bear such a view of life after he, like Miranda, has been confronted with the difficulties of the world and life, suffered from them and attempted seriously to overcome them, his view of life can be said to be a really significant one. In order to gain such a genuine view of life, man needs to have an honest attitude toward life, valuable experiences from it and a deep understanding of things of life and of human nature. This view of life, however, is not that of an old man's who has no longer little chance in his life. It never seems to have come from resignation to the destiny. Miranda has hope in her future. If we think of the fact that Porter wrote this novel from her own experience and that when she published it, she was almost fifty years old and had reached maturity in life, we know that this is a gem of a view of life.

In this short work Porter gives a clear answer to the great question what life is. Besides, she makes a cold analysis of love, an important factor of life. By using abundant symbols and allusions, she succeeds in clearing up these problems in this short work. And owing to the very richness in her technical device, this work is made into a difficult one. We must always be on the alert when we read this novel. All the incidents, episodes, descriptions and words are full of hints. Not a word can be missed, because they are often very ambiguous. If we overload or misinterpret them, we are not likely to be led to a full understanding of this novel. This novel is very compact. Compactness is indispensable especially to short stories. It has technical ingenuity of a short story and the profundity in substance of a novel. On reading this novel we realize that Porter is not merely a writer of short stories who gives us readers a glimpse of a phase of human life, but a great nove-

list who grapples with the core of the great question what life is.

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